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Guide to the Joel S. Goldsmith Papers 1949-1964



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Table of Contents

Descriptive Summary	3
Information on Use	3
Access	3
Citation	3
Biographical Note	3
Scope Note	6
Subject Headings	6
INVENTORY	6

Descriptive Summary

Identifier ICU.SPCL.GOLDSMITH

Title Goldsmith, Joel. Papers

Date 1949-1964(inclusive)

Size 1.5 linear feet (3 boxes)

Repository 1100 East 57th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60637

Abstract The Goldsmith, Joel. Papers consist of 1.5 linear feet and contain materials that date from 1949 to 1964. Goldsmith, a one time Christian Science healer, was an independent mystic who founded a movement called the Infinite Way. The collection includes letters written by Goldsmith to Lorraine Sinkler and Ann Darling Kuys, both of whom were followers of the movement. The collection also contains copies of a few Masonic talks given by Goldsmith in 1958 and 1959.

Information on Use

Access

The Goldsmith, Joel. Papers are available for research. The researcher must obtain permission from the copyright holder before the Special Collections Research Center can make photocopies of any material in the collection.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection the preferred citation is:

Goldsmith, Joel. Papers, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

Biographical Note

Joel S. Goldsmith was born in New York city on March 10, 1892. Although his father was a successful importer of European laces and textiles, and his mother was a cultured woman who taught her son to appreciate music, Goldsmith attended school only through the 8th grade, after which he began to travel and learn his father's business. He grew up as a non-practicing Jew, well-grounded in the ethical principles of the decalogue, but with only the minimal Jewish education necessary for confirmation in a Reform synagogue. In 1915 his father fell seriously ill while on a business trip to Great Britain. Doctors in England notified the family that the elder Goldsmith was about to die. When his father unexpectedly recovered after Goldsmith's chance encounter with a Christian Science healing practitioner, Goldsmith began to ask questions about the existence and nature of God and to educate himself about Christian Science as well as other

religious teachings. His search for religious knowledge and understanding lead him to become a Mason at the age of 21, an affiliation he maintained throughout his later life as an independent religious teacher.

After serving in the United States Marines during World War I, Goldsmith returned to the family business, which soon failed owing to competition from the post-war ready-made garment industry. At this time he became critically ill with tuberculosis. When given a medical prognosis of three months to live, he consulted a Christian Science healer. He recovered within three months, and several years later while working as a travelling salesman he again consulted a Christian Science healer when stricken with a severe cold in Detroit. His conversation with the second practitioner marked the beginning of a conversion experience through which Goldsmith himself became a Christian Science healer. By his own account, business clients and strangers began to seek him out unsolicited, asking him to pray for their recovery. Gradually, he abandoned his livelihood as a salesman and became a full-time Christian Science healer. He joined a Christian Science church in New York, served as a spiritual adviser and healer at Rikers Island Prison, and established himself as a general practitioner of Christian Science healing. He soon adopted a policy of never charging for his healing services and depending solely upon God to provide for his needs through unsolicited sources of income. By the early 1930's he was successful enough in this method of practice to marry Rose Robb and take on the support of her two children.

The new family relocated to Boston, where one of the children planned to attend Harvard University. Again, Goldsmith built a Christian Science healing practice from the ground up, attracting a large and faithful clientele. Despite his lack of formal education, he was permitted to enroll in Sanskrit language courses at Harvard University, which enabled him to pursue close study of ancient Hindu wisdom and mystical philosophy. Having served for ten years as a Christian Science practitioner in Boston, Goldsmith decided to move to Florida with his wife, who died shortly thereafter. Following a brief return to Boston, Goldsmith was persuaded by friends to move to California. There he became reacquainted with his deceased wife's former classmate, Nadea Allen, whom he married in 1945. By this time, Goldsmith began to feel that he had learned all that the Christian Science movement had to teach him, and that it was time for him to separate himself from what he called religious "organization." He believed that a revelation of truth was unfolding itself to his consciousness. This truth transcended and could not be contained or expressed within the structures of any existing church or religion. As an independent mystic, he published his first book, which later provided the name for the movement he would found, *The Infinite Way* (1946).

While living in California with his second wife, Goldsmith began to acquire a reputation as a spiritual teacher. Although he disclaimed any scholarly knowledge of the Bible, pupils presented themselves unbidden, insisting that he tutor them in the spiritual life and open their eyes to the true meaning of scripture. Thrust into the role of reluctant master, Goldsmith developed the mystical method of biblical interpretation described in his book *Spiritual Interpretation of Scripture* (1948). Using this method, Goldsmith would open his Bible randomly and meditate on whatever passage presented itself until enlightenment as to its true esoteric meaning came to him. Soon Goldsmith was receiving invitations to speak throughout the Pacific Northwest, and a corpus of his tape-recorded public lectures began to accumulate. In 1950 an invitation

to give spiritual instruction at the Unity Center in Waikiki, Honolulu, prompted Goldsmith to consider a permanent geographical transition to Hawaii. This plan placed a strain on his marriage, however, as his wife did not wish to leave California. Goldsmith resettled alone, and after several years of separation from his wife, Goldsmith obtained a divorce in January 1956; he married Emma Lindsay in March 1957.

Initially, Goldsmith held classes in his private home in Hawaii; eventually, however, the influence of his published writings created a demand for him to travel widely on lecture tours. Students and adherents to the precepts of his concept of the Infinite Way formed self-selecting groups which became known as Tape Groups, gathering together to listen to recordings of Goldsmith's lectures. These groups sponsored Goldsmith's many trips to Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, and created an international network of followers of the Infinite Way. Goldsmith was adamant, however, that the Infinite Way should never become an organized religion or legal entity with an official membership, a professional leadership, or codified beliefs. The Infinite Way, according to his teaching, was not an institution but a mode of consciousness.

Goldsmith experienced this mode of consciousness with increasing intensity over a period of many years. This processual experience began in November of 1928 when he first heard the inner voice that guided him throughout the development of his message and ministry. He always obeyed the prompting of this voice in decisions great and small and incubated its communications through a discipline of self-guided meditation. In the mid-1940s, Goldsmith's periods of meditation began to be the loci of a series of spiritual experiences he termed "initiations," some of which culminated in "ordination": conscious union with God. During a visit to Zürich, Switzerland in November of 1954, he reached the zenith of his mystical experience in a transfiguration-style event he called becoming "Christed."

In content, the message of the Infinite Way is mystical monism, similar in its chief tenants to neo-platonism and Vedanta. All phenomena, both positive and negative, good and evil, are the transient material manifestations of the infinite, eternal, spiritual One. Every individual bears within him or herself an alienated fragment of the immortal One; this inner self naturally inclines toward return and reintegration with its true nature and source. The spiritual life of prayer and meditation leads gradually to a super-rational apprehension of unity with the ultimate, indestructible, and all-pervading One. As the individual enjoys increasing consciousness of identity of being with God, pain, suffering, and disease are recognized to be illusory non-entities and cease to exist for the enlightened initiate who gains seemingly miraculous healing powers. Reinterpreting Christianity in conformity with monistic principles, Goldsmith understood the sonship of Jesus as the perfect attainment of full conscious union with God. Such sonship or Christhood, he believed, was the attainable spiritual destiny of all human beings.

In the final years of his life, Goldsmith undertook numerous publishing commissions. The resulting books, edited by Lorraine Sinkler, each comprise a collection of transcribed class and lecture materials woven and spliced together to create subject-specific monographs representative of Goldsmith's teachings. The titles include *The Art of Meditation* (1956), *Practicing the Presence* (1958), *The Art of Spiritual Healing* (1959), *Conscious Union with God* (1960), *Living the Infinite Way* (1961), *The Thunder of Silence* (1961), *A Parenthesis in Eternity*

(1963), and Leave Your Nets (1964). Since Goldsmith's death on June 17, 1964, taped and transcribed material has continued to form the substance of additional posthumous publications.

Scope Note

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Subject Headings

- Goldsmith, Joel
- Sinkler, Lorraine
- Kuys, Ann Darling
- The Infinite Way

INVENTORY

Box 1

Folder 1

Letters, Joel Goldsmith to Lorraine Sinkler, 1949-1950

Box 1

Folder 2

Letters, Joel Goldsmith to Lorraine Sinkler, 1951

Box 1

Folder 3

Letters, Joel Goldsmith to Lorraine Sinkler, 1952

Box 1

Folder 4

Letters, Joel Goldsmith to Lorraine Sinkler, 1953

Box 1

Folder 5

Letters, Joel Goldsmith to Lorraine Sinkler, 1954

Box 1

Folder 6-7

Letters, Joel Goldsmith to Lorraine Sinkler, 1955

Box 1

Folder 8

Letters, Joel Goldsmith to Lorraine Sinkler, 1956

Box 1

Folder 9

Letters, Joel Goldsmith to Lorraine Sinkler, 1957

Box 1

Folder 10

Letters, Joel Goldsmith to Lorraine Sinkler, 1958

Box 1

Folder 11

Letters, Joel Goldsmith to Lorraine Sinkler, 1959

Box 2

Folder 1-2

Letters, Joel Goldsmith to Lorraine Sinkler, 1960

Box 2

Folder 3-4

Letters, Joel Goldsmith to Lorraine Sinkler, 1961

Box 2

Folder 5-6

Letters, Joel Goldsmith to Lorraine Sinkler, 1962

Box 2

Folder 7-8

Letters, Joel Goldsmith to Lorraine Sinkler, 1963

Box 2

Folder 9

Letters, Joel Goldsmith to Lorraine Sinkler, 1964

Box 3

Folder 1

Letters, Joel Goldsmith to Ann Darling Kuys, 1954

Box 3

Folder 2

Letters, Joel Goldsmith to Ann Darling Kuys, 1955

Box 3

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Box 3

Folder 9

Letters, Joel Goldsmith to Ann Darling Kuys, 1962

Box 3

Folder 10

Letters, Joel Goldsmith to Ann Darling Kuys, 1963-1964

Box 3

Folder 11

Masonic Talks, speeches given by Joel Goldsmith, 1958-1959